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ABSTRACT

Student congress is a speech activity in which students act as a legislative assembly, write and debate bills, and learn parliamentary procedure. It allows the teacher to make points about advocacy, ethics in persuasion, contemporary issues, and the workings of a democracy at the same time that students develop a feeling of control and mastery, practice lessons from social studies classes, develop leadership skills, and become better advocates of their ideas. During the activity, each student should (1) write a bill or resolution, (2) prepare and deliver an authorship speech, (3) act as presiding officer, (4) act as sergeant at arms, (5) act as clerk for one class session, and (6) deliver a minimum of 15 debate speeches on bills. Students can begin to write bills on their own while the teacher continues to teach them how to conduct the student congress on a daily basis, including such items as call to order, attendance, call for old business, call for new business, and the close of the session. At the same time, the teacher should interweave instruction on various motions that need to be made during the sessions. When students have learned to conduct the congress, they then elect a presiding officer for the next session. Meanwhile, the teacher acts as the parliamentarian; grading speeches, keeping records, and judging conduct. (Appendixes contain standards of conduct, information on bills and resolutions, a table of motions, a sample ballot, and a sample critique sheet.) (JL)

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Design and Implementation of a Student Congress in the Secondary Classroom

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The Speech classroom can be turned into a student congress with a bit of planning and a little patience. Student congress is a speech activity in which the students act as a legislative assembly, write and debate bills, and learn parliamentary procedure. If the Secondary teacher is willing to invest the effort, a most rewarding experience can be generated for both the teacher and the students. The advantages of this approach should become apparent. These advantages should be enough to convince the Speech teacher to try a student congress at least once. The experience of each of us using student congress has been that once you've tried it in your classroom, you'll use it every semester.

Student congress can be used in conjunction with a number of other activities. It can lead into units on debate, be used as a follow-up to extemp, or as an outgrowth of original oratory. The student congress activity allows the teacher to make points about advocacy, ethics in persuasion, contemporary issues, and the workings of a democracy. Student congress allows the students to develop a feeling of control and mastery, to practice lessons from social studies classes, to develop leadership skills, and to become a better advocate of their ideas.

The focus of this paper will be the pragmatics of setting up and operating a student congress in the secondary classroom. It is assumed that the speech teacher that attempts this activity already has a more than adequate knowledge of persuasive speech techniques. No particular attention will be given to the style of, or evaluation of, debate speeches given in the congress sessions - we are sure you are familiar with this practice.

At the beginning of this unit of study, each student should be made aware of the things that will be expected of them. Typically it is assumed that each student will:

1. Write one bill or resolution
2. Prepare and deliver one authorship speech
3. Act as presiding officer for one class session
4. Act as Sgt. at Arms for one class session
5. Act as Clerk for one class session
6. Deliver a minimum of 15 debate speeches on bills (not counting the authorship speech)

In the past it has often been useful to suggest that these were the minimum requirements for passing this unit of work. This generally encourages debate while allowing the students to have a certain feeling of control over when they will speak.

Typical point values for each of the assignments have been;

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Bill | 100 pts. possible |
| 2. Authorship | 100 pts. possible |
| 3. Presiding | 100 pts. possible |
| 4. Sgt. at Arms | 50 pts. possible |
| 5. Clerk | 50 pts. possible |
| 6. Speeches.15.@.10.pts..each | 150 pts. possible |

Students will shortly discover that they cannot even pass without giving speeches and will get into the swing of the exercise simply because they have to. Once they have been gently persuaded in this manner they become very active, and indeed, enjoy the congress sessions. The next step will be a recognition, on their part, that they can raise their point totals by making more speeches. If the teacher has specified point totals needed for a certain letter grade at the beginning of the congress this becomes a way for the student to get the grade that they desire.

As an example, in the past it has been suggested to students that they needed the following point totals for various grades: A = 522 or more, B = 484 to 521, C = 412 to 483, D = 385 to 411. Given a student that has done low B work on all assignments that student will have 484 points at the completion of the minimum assigned work. This total will be 38 points from the

minimum for an A (522). The student may decide that it isn't so bad giving speeches and willingly give 5 or 6 additional speeches to reach the needed 522 points for an A. Alternately, it has been suggested in the past that the bare minimum for passing the unit work be set and allow the rest of the scale to float. In other words, one would suggest that 400 points will earn a D for the unit but that the rest of the scale will be determined by the performance of the rest of the class. As an example, we might say that at the end of the unit the highest point total in class will be taken as a perfect grade and all other grades will be calculated based on that standard. In this manner 95% of the highest total will be an A, 88% will be a B, and so on. This approach has also been very productive in terms of motivating a highly competitive group.

The next order of business for the teacher will be to teach the students how to write either a bill or a resolution. This procedure is fairly simple and sample pieces of legislation are provided at the end of this paper. The major difference between the bill and the resolution is that the former has the weight of law - it needs to have some provision for punishment. The resolution is merely a statement of the general feelings of the legislative body and carries with it no legal weight. Generally, the bill or resolution is double spaced and each line is numbered. Students will be encouraged to keep the bill to one page or less. It is most convenient to have the students prepare the bills or resolutions on ditto masters. In this way the bills can be duplicated easily and each member of the assembly can have a copy during debate. Ideas for legislation can come from the news, units on extemp, social science classes, local events, or even matters that are of concern in your High School. Each student should be required to have an idea for their bill or resolution very early in the process. It is better to force early closures and

allow some changes than to allow the students to put off such a choice and not have any bills for debate when you are ready to begin the congress. Students should be encouraged to select ideas that are controversial. This will take a bit of courage on the part of the teacher but it will provide heated debate and a very interested class. Topics such as abortion, drugs, the death penalty, prayer in school, and welfare have provided excellent platforms for discussions of ethics in debate, the real problems that legislators face, and so on. Don't be too timid and limit your students - you will find that they can handle some of these issues better than their adult counterparts.

Students can at this time begin to write bills on their own. The teacher will continue to teach. At this time it is necessary to teach the student how to conduct the student congress on a daily basis. This can be accomplished by showing the students the daily order of business for each session. It is important to point out to the students that they need to know this procedure because they will be the presiding officer for one day and it will be their responsibility to run the congress. You will be the parliamentarian not the presiding officer. Their grade will be based on how well they follow the order of business that is needed to move the session along.

The daily order of business will be something like this:

1. Call to order (Presiding officer)
2. Attendance (clerk - at the request of the Presiding officer)
3. Call for old business (the Presiding officer should ask if there is any old business - at this time bills that have been tabled may be removed from the table and debated again)
4. New business (in the absence of new business or at the conclusion of old business)
 - a. the clerk may announce the calendar (these are bills that are up to be debated - it is set by the parliamentarian)
 - b. presentation of the next bill to be debated (the clerk hands out copies of the bill or resolution and then reads the legislation at the request of the Presiding officer)
 - c. clarification (the author has the chance to clarify the bill in case of a misprint)

- d. authorship speech is presented (this is a full blown persuasive speech and should be graded as one)
 - e. debate on the legislation (debate always alternates from affirmative to negative and back again. The first speech is the author's, it is an affirmative speech. It is followed by a negative speech. The author has no special privilege after the authorship speech)
 - f. call for the question (when debate lags it is appropriate for some member of the assembly to call for the question. This is a vote to vote - it is not a vote on the bill but a vote on whether the assembly is ready to vote on the bill. The call for question must be made by a member of the house - it must receive a two-thirds majority to pass. If the question fails then debate resumes, if it passes then a vote on the bill results.)
 - g. vote on the bill (Presiding officer calls for the vote - it will be by a show of hands unless any other means is decided by the assembly. Votes are always counted by the clerk and reported to the Presiding officer. The Presiding officer reports the result of the vote.)
 - h. next bill on the calendar (clerk passes out the next bill and reads it - the process is repeated as long as time allows)
4. Close of the daily session
- a. call for the orders of the day (at about ten minutes before the end of the class session some member of the assembly must call for the orders of the day. This is a motion that will set in sway the closing procedures. The orders of the day include:
 - 1. nominations for clerk for the next session
 - 2. election of the next clerk
 - 3. nominations for sgt. at arms
 - 4. election of sgt. at arms
 - 5. nominations for Presiding officer
 - 6. election of Presiding officer
 - b. announcement of the calendar for the next session (this function can be carried out by the parliamentarian and allows some control of the movement of debate)
 - c. motion to recess (this is a motion that requires the setting of a particular time for reconvening the assembly. It is different from a motion to adjourn which will be used the last day of the session to end the congress.)

This daily procedure will be used every day of the session. It is important that each student be familiar with the procedure before you begin. It may be helpful to include a test at this point of the class to motivate the students to learn the order of business and the different motions that will be needed to move the assembly along. A table of simple motions is

included at the end of this paper. It would be wise to copy this chart and be sure that each student has a copy. When the students learn that they must now live by parliamentary procedure, they will want to know how to get things done.

During the period when the teacher is teaching the order of business, instruction on various motions that need to be made at various points can be interwoven. It will be helpful if each student has a copy of the chart of motions during this period. Numerous samples of procedure need to be worked into the instruction period. It will be useful if the teacher makes real examples to illustrate points by actually carrying out the required procedure.

The next phase of the student congress will be a period of at least one day - several if needed - in which the teacher acts as both presiding officer and parliamentarian. During this period the congress will not run smoothly. Typically, the students will not have mastered the necessary procedure to carry on the congress and the teacher will spend most of their time correcting procedural flaws.

When the teacher is satisfied that the students have attained at least minimally sufficient knowledge of procedure to conduct the congress, a student should be elected as the presiding officer for the next session. At this point the teacher will become the parliamentarian. In this role the teacher will grade all speeches, keep the records of who has spoken and be the master arbiter of conduct. It should be made clear to the students that the parliamentarian is the final power in all decisions. The students should be allowed as much freedom as is possible but when the limit is reached, the parliamentarian can intervene.

Congress can now operate on a daily basis. Enough sessions must be

allowed for each student to preside for one session. Speeches will be graded on a basis of one to ten. The teacher can tell the students their scores at the end of each session or as it is convenient. Speeches are generally limited to three minutes in length but the teacher may change this to suit any special requirements. The clerk can be assigned the duty of keeping time.

Additional information is provided for conduct of the assemblymen at the end of this paper. It would be wise to duplicate this and hand it out to the members of the class so that they would know what is expected of them. If you wish to have interschool or interclass competitions, instructions for outside judges is also included.

Try a student congress in your classroom. We believe that you and your students will find it a most rewarding experience.

CONDUCT OF LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLYMEN

Speaking

- A) Each time an individual speaks on a bill/resolution or on an amendment to a bill/resolution, it counts as one speech. An assemblyman may speak no more than five times in one legislative day. FFP's State Assembly is two legislative days. A legislative day = two sessions. If there are more than two sessions, at the start of the third session, everyone starts at zero.
- B) Speeches given on secondary motions--e.g., extend debate, refer to committee--do not count as speeches and no points are awarded.
- C) Every bill/resolution before the Assembly will receive at least a sponsor's speech.

Questioning

- A) To Interrupt A Speaker - If one interrupts a speaker to ask a question and the speaker agrees, the question counts as a speech, BUT RECEIVES NO POINTS.
- B) Free Questioning Period - Questions asked during these free questioning periods will not count as a speech and no points are awarded. After a bill/resolution has been read, but prior to the sponsor's speech, there will be a two-minute cross examination period. These questions must be on the mechanics of the bill only. The author must answer these questions. Also, at the conclusion of each speech, there will be a one-minute cross examination period, but the speaker may refuse to answer any questions.

During these free questioning periods, the sponsor or speaker shall recognize the questions. Assemblymen may ask no more than one question at a time, so long as there are other assemblymen standing.

Recognition of Speakers

- A) The Presiding Officer's points are awarded on the basis of fairness.
- B) Assemblymen who have spoken the least should always be recognized first. For example, a one-person delegation is standing and has not spoken (0%) and an assemblyman from a two-person delegation which has spoken once (50%) is standing. Both of the speakers seeking recognition have not spoken. By the rules and using the percentages, the one-person delegation should be recognized. If the Presiding Officer thinks in terms of percentages, fair and appropriate recognition will result.
- C) The Presiding Officer cannot give a sponsor's speech.
- D) Speakers will recognize questions during the free questioning period.
- E) Speakers may not yield remaining time to another assemblyman.

Voting

- A) All votes except to adjourn and secret balloting for Presiding Officers and Best Speakers shall be conducted by standing votes.
- B) All decisions will be based upon a majority vote of those present and voting. The only exception will be those secondary motions which require a 2/3 majority according to the parliamentary authority, or these special rules.

Amending

Of course, a bill/resolution may be amended. Amendments must be submitted in writing to the parliamentarian. If the amendment's sponsor is recognized as an affirmative speaker, he/she should say, "There is an amendment on the floor." The Presiding Officer will direct the clerk to read the amendment aloud.

If an amendment is seconded, it will be debated. If it fails to get a second, the author still has the floor as an affirmative speaker. If he declines, then the Presiding Officer will call for another affirmative speaker.

NOTE: SECONDING OF AMENDMENTS TO BILLS/RESOLUTIONS REQUIRES SUPPORT FROM 1/3 OF THE ASSEMBLY.

Miscellaneous

- A) No recesses may be called without approval of Tournament Director or parliamentarian.
- B) No notes may be sent to the Presiding Officer or other assemblymen.
- C) Assemblymen may not request permission to approach the Presiding Officer.

INFORMATION ON BILLS AND RESOLUTIONS

1. On determining which form to use:
 - a. Use the form for Bills if the particular level of government you are concerned with 1) has jurisdictional control and 2) can enforce the provisions.
 - b. Use the form for Resolutions if the particular level of government you are concerned with 1) has no jurisdictional control and 2) cannot enforce the provisions. This form is used, however, to express the legislatures attitude toward some important problem--to let others outside our jurisdictional boundaries know how we feel. Generally this form would be used to express U.S. attitudes toward some foreign problem.
2. Remember that although we are factually a mock congress without REAL power, we pretend to be the real thing and thus would use the correct form above as if we had the power.
3. FORM FOR A BILL: (title) A Bill
 - (number every line starting with the enacting clause) 1. (enacting clause) Be it enacted by this NFL student congress here assembled that (repeat title)
 3. Article 1
 4. (specify who will be given the responsibility for etc. enforcing the provisions of your law)
 - Article 2
(step by step procedures for making the plan work.
How and what will be done)
 - Article 3
(if penalties are necessary to get obedience,
they go here)
 - Article 4
(effecting date. When you want your bill to go
into effect)
 - Article 5
(null and void clause)

Note: If there are not required penalty provisions, then the last two articles move up. Obviously, a bill requiring another government agency or person to do something requires no penalties since the penalty for disobedience is already specified in the Constitution that they are sworn to uphold.
4. FORM FOR A RESOLUTION: (title) A Resolution
 - (as many whereas clauses as you want) Whereas, (a reason for the resolution, and
Whereas, (a reason for the resolution, therefore
 1. Be it resolved, that this congress go on record...
 - 2.

SAMPLE

A Bill
To provide tougher child abuse laws

1. Be it enacted by this NFL student congress here assembled that tougher
2. child abuse laws be initiated.
3. Article 1
4. The department of Health, Education and Welfare shall be responsible for
5. enforcing the provisions of this law.
6. Article 2
7. Sec. 1. Any hospital, doctor, nurse, or para-medical person, must report
8. any instance of evidence of child abuse.
9. Sec. 2. A child who has been abused shall be removed from the custody of
10. any parent guilty of such abuse and be placed in the custody of the local
11. custodial agent.
12. Sec. 3. Child abuse shall be considered a felony which shall carry a
13. penalty of not less than three months in a detention facility with
14. psychiatric care to be provided.
15. Article 3
16. Failure of any person to adhere to the requirement of Article 2, Sec. 1.
17. shall be charged with felonious neglect and be subject to penalties of
18. not less than three months in jail and a maximum of loss of job or
19. loss of license.
20. Article 4
21. The provisions of this bill shall become effective upon passage.
22. Article 5
23. All laws or portions of laws in conflict with the provisions of this
24. bill are null and void.

Respectfully submitted,

SAMPLE

A Resolution
On OPEC oil pricing

- Whereas, the price of oil determines the rate of development of Less Developed Countries, and
- Whereas, the price of oil is an integral determinant of the inflation rate in the industrialized West, and
- Whereas, the OPEC pricing policies determine the future price of oil, therefore
1. Be it resolved by this congress that we go on record urging the OPEC
 2. nations not to raise the price of oil at their forthcoming meeting
 3. in January.

Respectfully submitted,

A BILL

- 1 Be It Enacted By The Student Congress Assembled that:
2 Section 1: The United States discontinue all sales of conventional
3 weapons to any country that denies basic human rights to its citizens.
4 Section 2: The United States discontinue all trade with any country
5 that violates human rights outside its borders.

A RESOLUTION

- 1 Whereas, violence has been increasing throughout the world, and
2 Whereas, the press gives extensive coverage to any acts of violence, and
3 Whereas, this coverages encourages more violence.
4 Therefore Be It Resolved By This Congress Assembled that a Congressional
5 subcommittee be established to formulate standards for the American Press.

A RESOLUTION

- 1 Whereas, the United States sells arms to many foreign countries, and
2 Whereas, many foreign countries have used these arms against our allies, and
3 Whereas, some countries which have received arms from the United States are
4 no longer our allies
5 Therefore Be It Resolved in the Student Congress Assembled That: the United
6 States stop all arms sales to all foreign countries.

Table of Most Frequently Used Parliamentary Motions

Type	Motion	Purpose	Second Required?	Debat-able?	Amend-able?	Required Vote	May Inte-rupt a Speech
Privileged	24. Fix Time for Reassembling	To arrange time of next meeting	Yes	Yes-T	Yes-T	Majority	Yes
	23. Adjourn	To dismiss the meeting	Yes	No	Yes-T	Majority	No
	22. To Recess	To dismiss the meeting for a specific length of time	Yes	Yes	Yes-T	Majority	No
	21. Rise to a Question of Privilege	To make a personal request during debate	No	No	No	Decision of Chair	Yes
	20. Call for the Orders of the Day	To force consideration of a postponed motion	No	No	No	Decision of Chair	Yes
Incidental	19. Appeal a Decision of the Chair	To reverse the decision of the chairman	Yes	No	No	Majority	Yes
	18. Rise to a Point of Order or Parliamentary Procedure	To correct a parliamentary error or ask a question	No	No	No	Decision of Chair	Yes
	17. To Call for a Roll Call Vote	To verify a voice vote	Yes	No	No	1/5	No
	16. Object to the Consideration of a Question	To suppress action	No	No	No	2/3	Yes
	15. To Divide a Motion	To consider its parts separately	Yes	No	Yes	Majority	No
	14. Leave to Modify or Withdraw a Motion	To modify or withdraw a motion	No	No	No	Majority	No
	13. To Suspend the Rules	To take action contrary to standing rules	Yes	No	No	2/3	No
Subsidiary	12. To Reconsider	To repeal previous action	Yes	Yes	Yes	2/3	No
	11. To Reconsider	To consider a defeated motion again	Yes	Yes	No	Majority	No
	10. To take from the Table	To reconsider tabled motion	Yes	No	No	Majority	No
	9. To Lay on the Table	To defer action	Yes	No	No	Majority	No
	8. Previous Question	To force an immediate vote	Yes	No	No	2/3	No
	7. To Limit or Extend Debate	To modify freedom of debate	Yes	Yes	Yes-T	2/3	No
	6. To Postpone to a Certain Time	To defer action	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority	Yes
	5. To Refer to a Committee*	For further study	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority	Yes
	4. To Amend an Amendment*	To modify a amendment	1/3	Yes	No	Majority	No
	3. To Amend*	To modify a motion	1/3	Yes	Yes	Majority	No
Main	2. To Postpone Indefinitely	To suppress action	Yes	Yes	No	Majority	No
	1. Main Motion	To introduce business	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority	No

*Nos. 5 Should Include:

1. How Appointed?
2. The Number
3. Report When?

or
To What Standing Committee

T—Time

*Nos. 3 and 4 by:

1. Inserting
2. Adding
3. Striking Out
4. Substituting
5. Striking out and Inserting

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
PARLIAMENTARIANS'S BALLOT

Session _____

My choice for Best Speaker (to be used in the event of an
inadequate number of nominees) is

Signature

NOTE: This ballot should be returned to Tournament headquarters
without consultation with the judges.

SCHOOL CRITIQUE SHEET

SCHOOL _____ SESSION: 1 2 3 4 HOUSE: S A E C Judge _____

Directions: Record the name, critical comments on the speech and points awards for each speech given from members of this school on this sheet.

NAME	CRITICAL COMMENTS ON SPEECH	POINTS